



MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM

Músaem Chontae Mhuineachain

DISCOVERING MONAGHAN MUSEUM

Classroom Pack for
Primary School Teachers

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Introduction

Monaghan Museum is committed to lifelong inclusive learning for all. We celebrate the county's fascinating rich cultural heritage, and collect, record, preserve, interpret and display objects from Monaghan's past for the future.

This classroom pack contains preparatory information for teachers for assistance in advance of a visit to the Museum, information relating to the themes and objects displayed in the galleries, and a range of follow-up activity ideas for continuing the learning from the Museum into the classroom after your visit.

History of the Museum

Monaghan County Museum first opened its doors to the public in 1974, becoming the first full time staffed, local authority funded museum in the Republic of Ireland. The Museum has been widely acclaimed for its commitment in displaying Monaghan's rich culture and heritage, and in 2024 celebrated its 50th year of operation. The Museum was originally housed in the Courthouse in the centre of town, but following a fire which gutted the building in 1981, the collection was rescued and moved to the Christian Brothers Secondary School. It was stored there temporarily, and a limited display was continued until the Museum moved again to a new location in Hill Street in 1986, where it then stayed until 2023.

Monaghan County Museum opened in its new home at the Peace Campus in June 2024. The Peace Campus offers the Museum an exciting opportunity to expand our appeal across the border region and reach new audiences. We look forward to continuing with our mission of promoting the cultural diversity and historical richness of the region to as wide an audience as possible. Monaghan County Museum is part of a network of twelve local authority museums around the country that are all part of the Local Authority Museums Network (LAMN).

Monaghan Museum for Primary Schools

The Museum provides a unique and engaging learning space for primary school children from schools North and South of the border. We collect, preserve, and display a wide range of objects ranging in date from the end of the last Ice Age all the way up to the present day. A large proportion of the artefacts in the Museum are on open display (rather than enclosed in display cases), allowing visitors the unique opportunity to encounter them up close and to better appreciate and experience them in person.

The Museum's galleries present a broad and informative representation of the county's rich history, displaying a large variety of artefacts that stimulate imaginations, encourage an understanding and appreciation of the past, and engage discussion. We pride ourselves on providing a warm, welcoming, and inclusive space for all of our visitors, and will work with your school to facilitate your needs and priorities.

Before your visit

Before your visit to Monaghan Museum, we recommend that children are introduced to the basic concept of museums and their work in the classroom. You can speak to the students about this and hold a classroom discussion to gather their prior knowledge or preconceptions about museums. Teachers can also use the Museum's website (<https://monaghan.ie/museum/>) or Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MonaghanCountyMuseum/>) to show students photos of the building and the display galleries and objects in advance. Studies have shown that children who understand and appreciate the reasons behind visiting organisations such as museums often undergo more meaningful and valuable learning experiences than those who do not.

What are Museums?

Museums are public places which collect objects from the recent and distant past to preserve them for the future. They put these objects on display so that people can come to the Museum to learn about life in the past. Museums also look after and protect these old objects so that they survive for future generations, and so that people can carry out research to learn more about the past and its people. The old objects protected by Museums are often called *artefacts*, and they are either stored away safely or put out for people to see in a type of display called an *exhibition*.

What do Museums do?

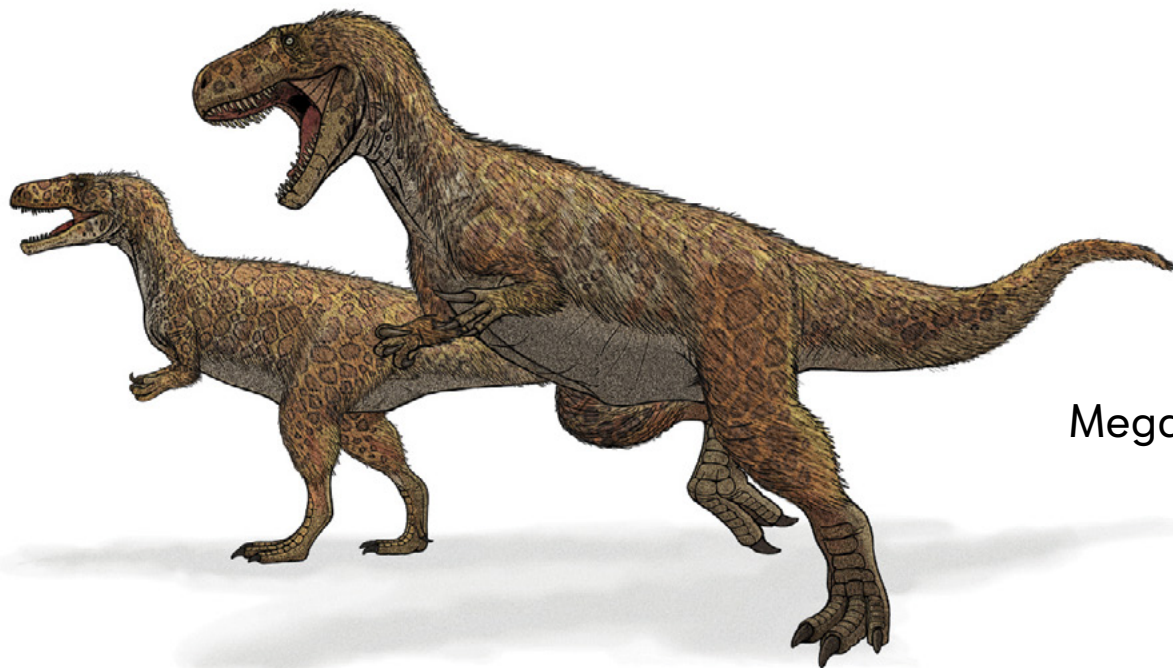
Through its objects, the Museum can tell us stories and information about what life was like in the past, and the Museum puts many of their objects on display so people can see them and learn about this history. Their work in preserving the objects of the past means that they will survive long into the future so that people will always have the chance to learn about the people and events that came before them. Museums protect their artefacts from things that might damage them like too much light, heat, or touch, and this is known as *conservation*.

What can we learn from Museums?

Museums can teach us many things about people from the recent and distant past. We can learn about the types of items that people made and used, the ways in which they used them and why, what people believed in, and what events and activities were important to their lives. Museums help us record the details of our lives and our histories for the future so that others can understand and learn about these many years from now. Museums show us the differences and similarities between our lives now and people's lives long ago.

Are there dinosaurs in Monaghan Museum?

Unfortunately not! One of the Museum's most common questions from children is why we do not have any dinosaur fossils or skeletons on display. While dinosaurs were once present in Ireland, they have left behind very few traces of their existence. Only two dinosaur bones have ever been discovered in Ireland at this time - both from the same location on the County Antrim coast. These bones are from the back legs of a carnivore (meat-eater) called *Megalosaurus*, and from a herbivore (plant-eater) called *Scelidosaurus*, which lived around 200 million years ago.



Megalosaurus dinosaur

Scelidosaurus dinosaur



Millions of years ago, dinosaurs who died in a watery environment became buried in mud and silt. Their bodies would decompose and leave the hard bones or shells behind. Over time, the sediment covering the skeletons would build up on top and eventually harden into rock, forming what we would refer to as a fossil. When palaeontologists (scientists specialising in dinosaurs) find fossils left behind as rock, they can often be in the form of bones, teeth, footprints, or even a dinosaur poo!

Dinosaur fossils are very rare in Ireland due to the type of geology present in the country. Most of Ireland's rocks are the wrong age to have these fossils in them - either too young or too old compared to when dinosaurs might have been present. Rocks that would be the right age have been covered up by other rock layers or been eroded away over many years. Even when rocks of the right age survive, they would have come from ancient seas or deserts, which wouldn't normally contain dinosaur remains because dinosaurs mainly lived on land. The bodies of the two dinosaur types that have been found in Ireland might have been swept out to sea, where they sank in the Jurassic seabed and became fossilised over time.

The two surviving Irish examples of dinosaur bones were only discovered in the 1980s, and the possibility exists that more may be found in the future, which would teach us more about the fascinating types of dinosaurs that existed in the country millions of years ago. For now, students can use our activity sheet on Page 18 to imagine what type of dinosaurs they think might have roamed in Monaghan in the very distant past!

Meet the Museum Object: The Famine Pot

The Museum is full of objects, many of which are often hundreds and thousands of years old. These objects were witnesses to the past, and if they could speak, they could tell us all about themselves and what life was like in the past when they were made and used! Because these objects can't speak for themselves, the Museum tries to tell their stories for them so that people can understand what part they played in the past to people and events.

If an object could speak, what would it say? Let's have a look at the Museum's Famine pot and find out its story.

I'm called a Famine pot, or a boiler, and am nearly two hundred years old.

I'm made of a strong metal known as cast iron.

I was used to mix and boil huge amounts of soup for starving people during the Famine.

I was kept in a special soup kitchen, where hungry people came to get a meal.

Hundreds of pots like me were sent to Ireland from England, and some came from as far away as Turkey and the U.S.A.

An open fire would have been lit underneath me to heat up my metal to boil the soup inside.

Food was scarce at the time, so my soup included things like animal fat, corn or barley, onions, parsnips, and turnips, and a small amount of beef.

I saw thousands of sick, hungry, and desperate people in the soup kitchens.

The starving people who saw me were happy to see me full of soup, because it meant that they might get a meal after not having eaten in a long time.

Even though I made many thousands of bowls of soup each day, often the kitchen would run out of food and we could not feed everyone who came.

After the Famine was over, I stopped being used for cooking.

Pots like me went on to be re-used as cattle troughs, or were left out in fields, with many rotting away over time.

I am in a Museum today because I am a reminder of how awful the time of the Famine was, and people can learn about that time in history through me.



Pre – Visit Museum Activity

Meet the Object: What’s my Story?

Museums try to tell the stories of objects which cannot speak for themselves. Pick an object from your home or your classroom and try to imagine what story it might tell if it had a voice! Draw a picture of your object and fill in some of the speech bubbles with what it might tell us.

You might answer questions like:

What is it?

Who does it belong to?

What does it do?

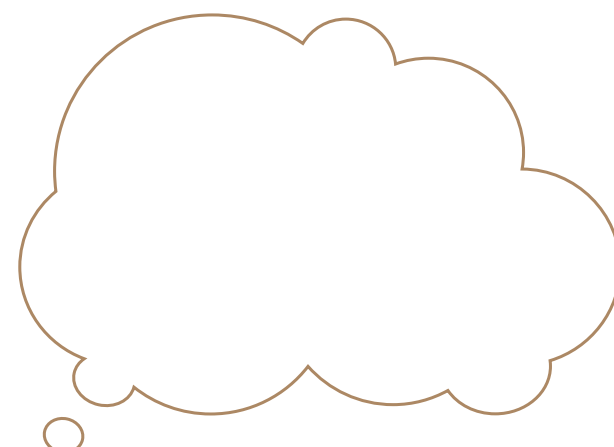
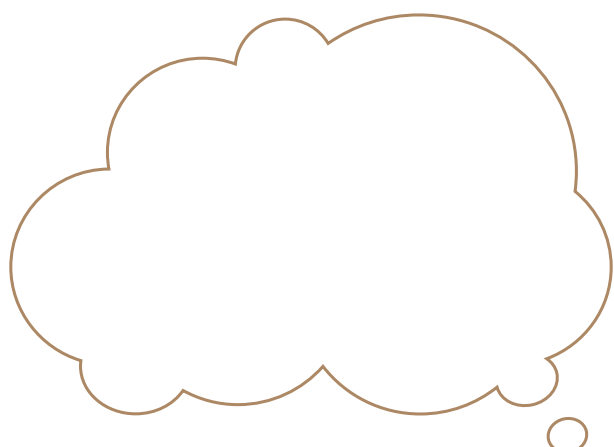
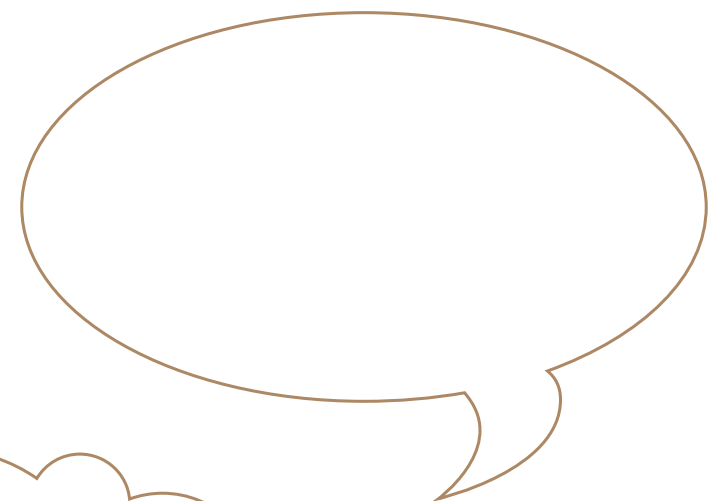
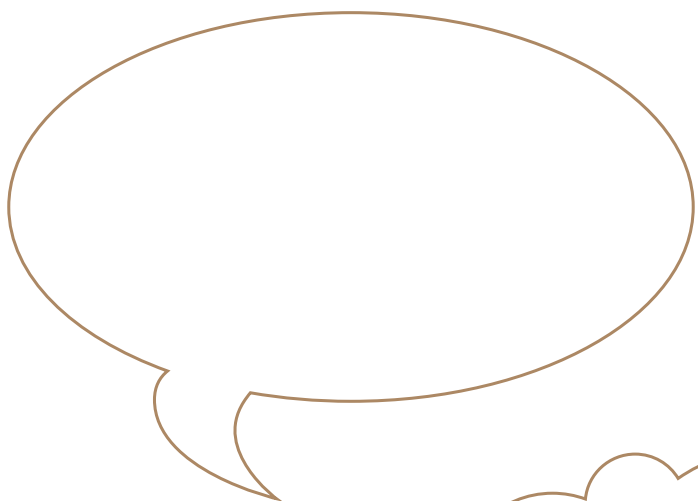
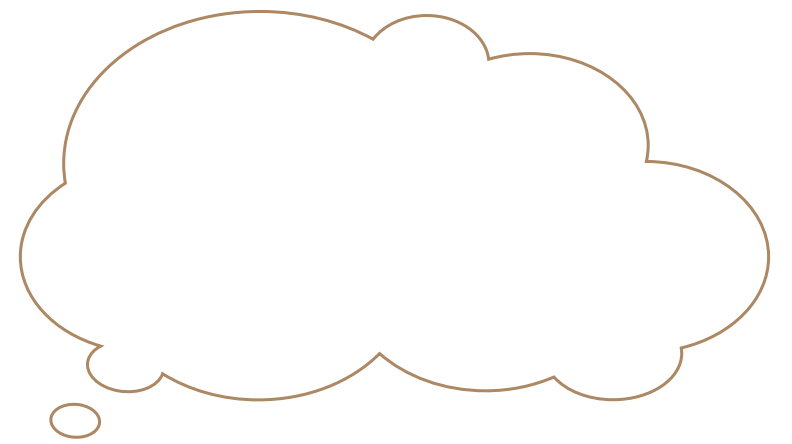
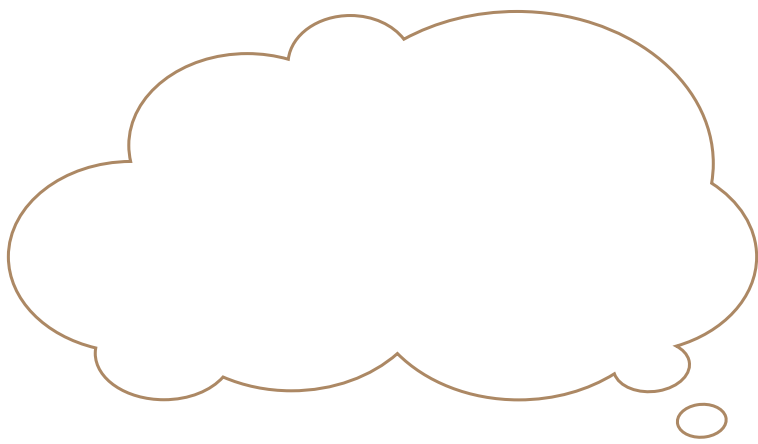
Where did it come from?

Who uses it?

What is it made of and who might have made it?

Does it tell us anything about the owner?

Why is it important?



Links to the Primary School Curriculum (R.O.I. & N.I.)

Several curriculum strands are embedded in the interactive learning and themes in our galleries. Engagement with these strands during a visit to the Museum complement and assist the children's learning in adherence with the primary school curriculum within a new environment outside the classroom.

R.O.I. Primary Curriculum Strands

Science Curriculum Strands

- Energy and forces
- Materials
- Environmental awareness and care

Geography Curriculum Strands

- Human environments
- Natural environments
- Environmental awareness and care
- A sense of place and space

History Curriculum Strands

- Working as an Historian
- Using Evidence
- Myself and my family
- Story
- Early people and ancient stories
- Life, society, work and culture in the past
- Eras of change and conflict
- Politics, conflict and society
- Continuity and change over time
- Time and Chronology
- Communication

Visual Arts Curriculum Strands

- Drawing
- Paint and colour
- Print
- Clay
- Construction
- Fabric and fibre

English Curriculum Strands

- Cognitive skills: speaking and listening skills

SPHE Curriculum Strands

- Myself and the wider world: developing citizenship

N.I. Primary Curriculum Strands

Foundation Stage: Primary 1 and 2

Language and Literacy

- Attention and Listening skills
- Social Communication/Language
- Language and Thinking
- Extended Vocabulary

The Arts

- Art and Design

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The World Around Us

- History
- Geography
- Science and Technology

Key Stage 1: Primary 3 and 4

Language and Literacy

- Talking and Listening
- Reading
- Writing

The Arts

- Art and Design

Religious Education

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The World Around Us

- History
- Geography
- Science and Technology

Key Stage 2: Primary 5, 6, and 7

Language and Literacy

- Talking and Listening
- Reading
- Writing

The Arts

- Art and Design

Religious Education

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The World Around Us

- History
- Geography
- Science and Technology



Visiting the Museum

Monaghan County Museum is located in The Peace Campus, Monaghan (Eircode H18 RP20). From Monday to Friday, it is open to the public from 11am to 5pm. The Museum is also open on Saturdays from 12pm to 5pm if teachers wish to make an advance or research visit ahead of their planned class tour. School groups are very welcome, and are requested to book their visit in advance by ringing 047 82928 or by emailing comuseum@monaghancoco.ie. Guided tours (lasting approximately an hour) are subject to availability and must be booked in advance with good notice.

Pay parking is available onsite at the Peace Campus underground car park. The building is fully accessible, and there is a lift from the underground car park into the building. The Museum displays are found on Level 2 and Level 3 of the building.

We ask that a minimum ratio of one adult per 15 students is upheld for all school visits, and that teachers and students adhere to our Code of Conduct while visiting the Museum. Large school groups may be divided into smaller groups to best facilitate guided tour sizes and movement around the galleries.

Selection of Relevant Objects & Themes explored in the Museum

The archaeological and historical themes discussed in the Museum are wide-ranging, ranging from the Middle Stone Age period ten thousand years ago all the way up to the twenty-first century. Below is a short summary of curriculum-relevant thematic strands that can be explored within the Museum.





Gallery Summaries: Themes and Displays

The Museum is divided into three galleries, each dealing with broad themes which demonstrate the shared connections through time within an often-divided border county. The Museum's current exhibition is titled "*Bordering Realities*", with its overall theme focusing on borders – their histories (whether personal or political), their functions, and their effects. The exhibition aims to demonstrate the many shared connections and crossovers inherent in the everyday lives of people of the county, challenging the traditional idea of borders as marking naturally opposing or conflicting lives and views. The common bonds between people of different backgrounds, religions, and politics are brought to the fore of the discussion, demonstrating the complexity of life in the border county of Monaghan.



Gallery 1

Living off the Land

This theme begins with a look at the early prehistoric settlers in the county, as well as some of the very earliest borders in the landscape, such as the Black Pig's Dyke. It displays objects connected to the earliest farmers during the New Stone Age, up to agricultural tools and implements used in the twentieth century, showing the objects created and used by people living on the land for thousands of years.

People of Monaghan

This photographic display explores the stories of a wide variety of Monaghan people, past and present, who have blazed a trail and contributed to local, national, and international history. The display introduces people from the county who have made significant achievements in many important subjects including sports, education, law, politics, medicine, and the arts.

Beliefs and Rituals

This section shows the varied religion and politics of the county's residents through time through the display of objects from shared life events such as birth, marriage, and death. An interactive touchscreen showing the Museum's collection of marching band banners, and a display of society sashes, demonstrate both the differences and similarities between different religions and organisations in the region.



Gallery 2

Life on the Border

This section of the Museum focuses particularly on the land border introduced by Partition in 1921, and the significant effects of the border for the lives of the people living on either side of it. This gallery also explores the implication of Brexit through two associated posters on loan from the Ulster Museum.

Cinema

Cinema was an extremely popular hobby for people within the county. The museum looks at items connected to some of the older cinemas that used to be in the county. Cinemas were the only way to watch films before television and streaming services became commonly used.

Transport

The importance of the train network to people of the county is explored here, as well as the reliance on public transport for travel at a time before private car ownership or air travel was commonplace.

Everyday Monaghan

This section of the gallery features a large slideshow display of a selection of the photographs taken by Monaghan photographer Donal McEnroe between 1973 to 1985. During this time, McEnroe collected images of everyday life in North Monaghan, preserving its people and places to film for the future.

The Big House

The history of the 'Big House' (large country houses and estates mainly owned and resided in by Anglo-Irish upper-class families) is explored through displayed objects relating to the residents of sites such as Castle Leslie and Rossmore Castle in Monaghan.

Poitín

A display of objects and anecdotes tell the story of the area's history with the production of poitín, an illegal and extremely strong alcohol often produced in stills by poor farmers as a means of making additional income.



Gallery 3

Struggling for Peace

This section of the gallery includes stories, photographs, uniforms, and weapons related to Monaghan men and women fighting on both sides of the War of Independence, as well as people from the county who served in the World Wars and with the United Nations and Army forces.

Crossing Borders

A display of objects, images, and interviews in AV format examines the experiences of a number of famous Monaghan people from today, who have made history in the fields of sport and the arts. Local people such as rugby player Tommy Bowe and actor Caitriona Balfe share their experiences of their backgrounds in a border county and their international successes.

Ulster Scots

A dedicated section of the gallery deals with the Ulster Scots people, exploring their history in the county, and some of the origins and meanings behind the Ulster Scots language. This display is the first of its kind in any museum on the island.

Continuing the learning after your visit

After your visit to the Museum, an in-class follow-up discussion can be beneficial to discover the impact of the visit for the children and their initial impressions. This can happen informally through chatting with the children about their impressions of the building and the displayed objects. It can also take place by encouraging them to draw a picture or write a short report or review about their visit, identifying their favourite object or something that they enjoyed learning about on the day.

Questions for discussion could include:

- Why do you think the Museum chose those particular objects for display?
- How were the objects put on display, and how could people learn about what they were?
- Was there anything different about the Museum to what you had imagined before your visit?
- Was there anything you learned or saw during your visit that surprised you?

The following pages include a number of activities that can be carried out in the classroom and which will help to continue the learning through objects and evidence which began onsite at the Museum. These will encourage children to reflect and build on what they learned during their visit, and will help them apply their ensuing skills and experience to other subjects and activities.

Follow-up Activity: Disappeared Dinosaurs!

Dinosaurs once lived in Ireland, but left behind very few traces. Only two dinosaur bones have been found in the country, both from the County Antrim coast. These two bones are from the back legs of a carnivore (meat-eater) called *Megalosaurus*, and from a herbivore (plant-eater) called *Scelidosaurus*, which lived around 200 million years ago. It is possible that more dinosaur fossils may be discovered in Ireland in the future, which would teach us more about the fascinating types of dinosaurs that existed in the country.

Use your imagination to draw a picture of what type of dinosaurs you think might have roamed around Monaghan millions of years ago! Would they have scales, feathers, spikes, wings, or horns? Remember that these might be brand new dinosaur types that we have never seen before, so you can be as creative and imaginative as you like in your drawing!



Scelidosaurus dinosaur



Megalosaurus dinosaur



Follow-up Activity: Learning about the past through photos!

Monaghan Museum displays a number of photographs taken by Monaghan photographer Donal McEnroe between the period of 1973 to 1985. These photographs show us snapshots in time of what everyday life was like back then for the people of the county. Students can use the evidence of the photographs to work as historians to gather information about life in the past in Monaghan.

Photograph #1 - Donnelly's Sweet Shop, Monaghan, in 1978



What can we learn about the past from this photo?

What differences can we see between then and now?

How would it have felt to buy your sweets from a shop like this rather than in a big supermarket like we might do today?

Photograph #2 - Filling the stove at Cornagilta National School, November 1983.



What can we learn about the past from this photo?

What differences can we see between then and now?

Why do you think this student is putting coal on the stove in school? Would this be something you would have to do today? Why?



L – R. Flint blade from Monaghan Museum, approx. 10,000 years old and possibly used as a tool. Flint axehead used during the Stone Age, which would originally have had a wooden handle.

Follow-up Activity: Creative Writing - A day in the life!

Why not use what you have learned from your museum visit as an opportunity to try out some themed creative writing? Choose a time period represented in the objects in the Museum and use it as a setting for students to write about the imagined day of a character from this time! Use one of the displayed objects as a start point to spark imagination – how would you think it was used, by who, and what for?

E.g. Remembering the Museum’s flint blade, querns, and stone axes through “A day in the life of a Stone Age child”, or remembering the Famine Pot through “A day in the life of a child during the Famine”.



Follow-up Activity: Make a Classroom Museum!

Why not make your own mini museum inside your classroom? All you will need is a spare table, paper/card labels with string attached, and the participation of the class! Children will have the opportunity to bring in an object from home that they would like to display. This does not necessarily need to be historical in nature – it can be any object which a child feels is of special significance, or tells some kind of important story to their class.

Simple objects connected to their own pasts, or that of their parents or grandparents, can often be a great way to demonstrate changes or continuity through time E.g. an old music record or cassette tape, a toy, a tool, or a coin etc.

Children should take time and consideration to write their own object labels, which can then be tied securely to their 'artefact'. Each object label should have a little handwritten information detailing:

What is the object?

How old is it?

What is it made of?

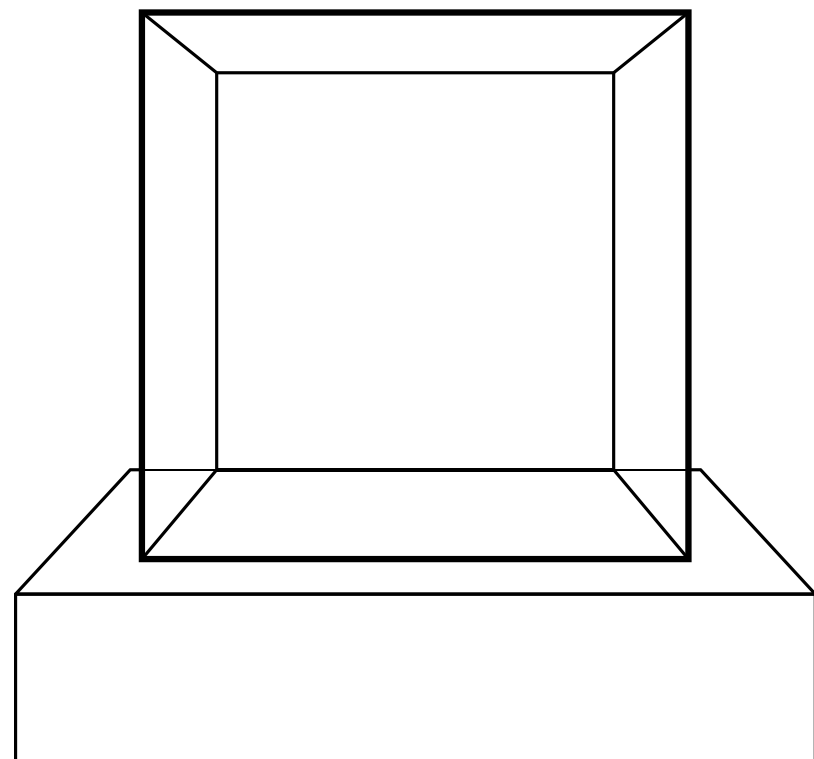
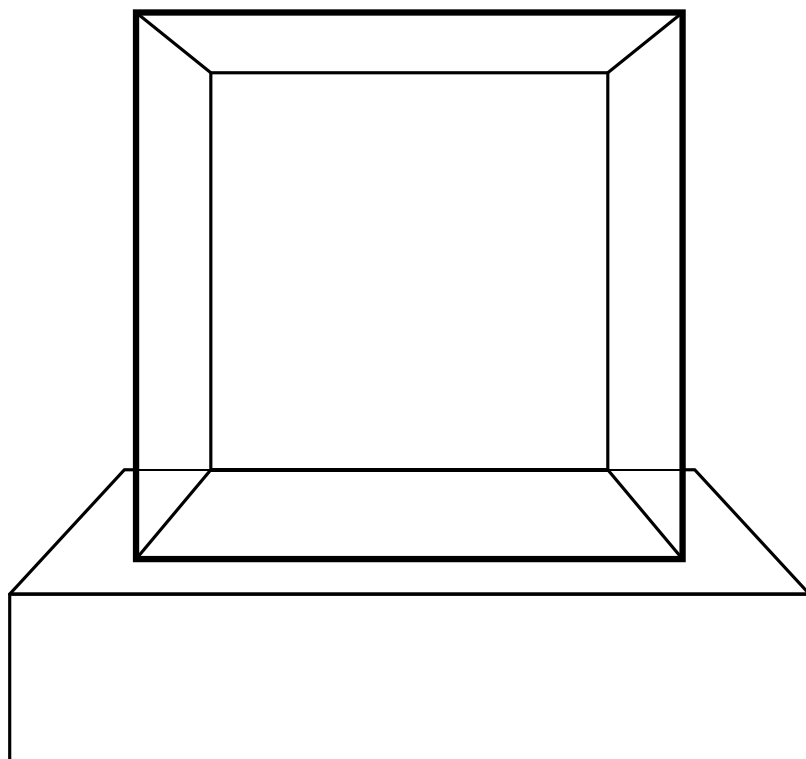
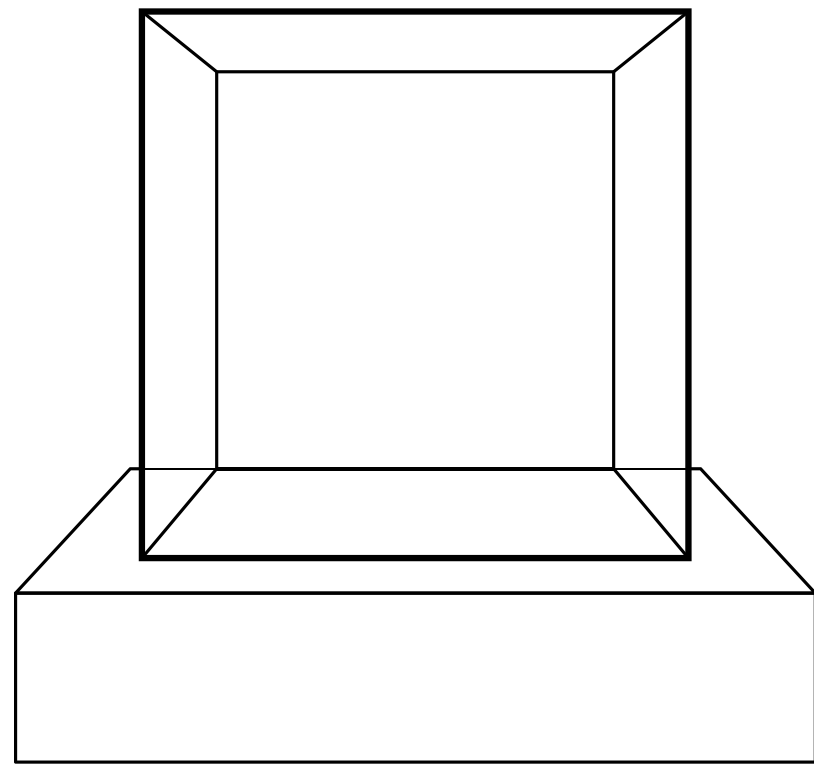
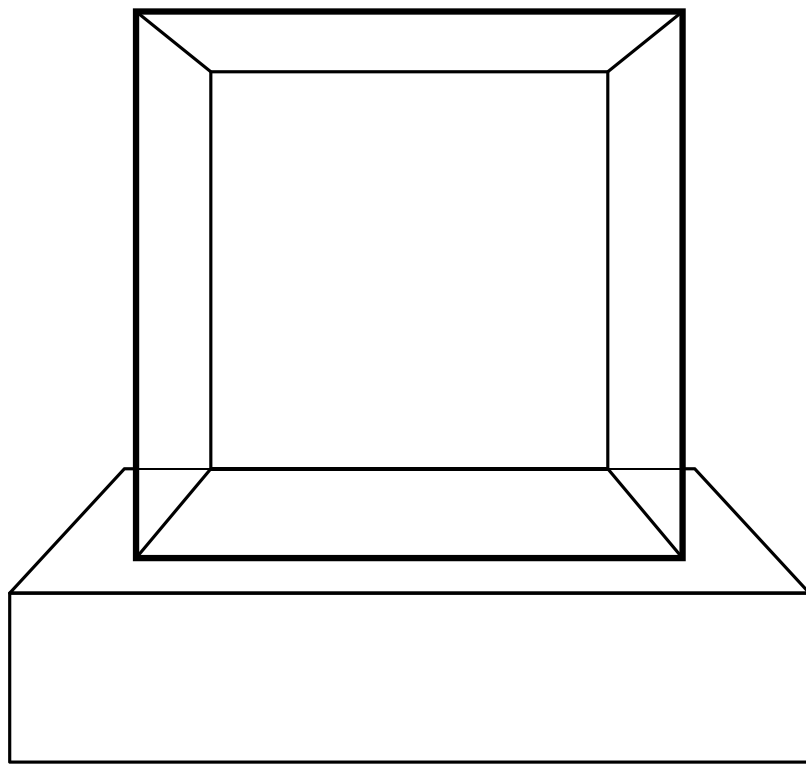
What was it used for?

Why do you think it is important/special?

These labelled objects can then be displayed on the dedicated table, with children given the opportunity to examine and handle them and question each other, prompting discussion on the purposes of museums and preserving objects and associated information.

Follow-up Activity Sheet: Make your own exhibition!

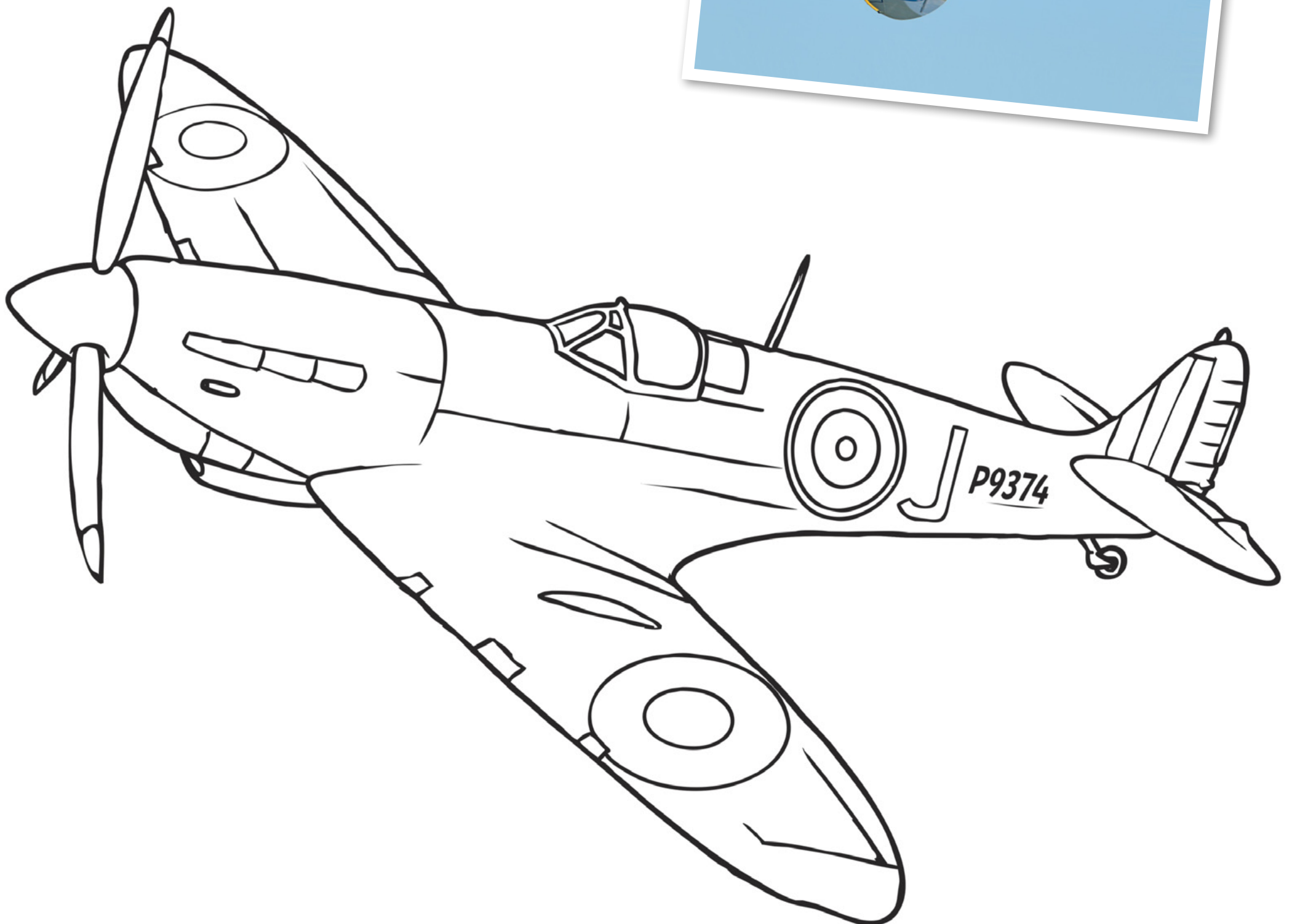
What objects would you choose to put on display in your own museum exhibition?
Draw them into the empty exhibition cases below and then write why you have
chosen to include them!



Why have you chosen these objects?

Follow-up Activity Sheet: Colour in the Spitfire!

The Museum displays parts of a war plane that crashed in Monaghan during World War II in 1942. This plane was called a Spitfire, and it was used by the British Royal Air Force (RAF) as a fighter plane during that war. The surviving parts of the plane were dug up from the ground in 2017 with the help of a team of archaeologists, the Museum staff, and students from schools in the area!



Follow-up Activity Sheet: Museum Wordsearch!

Find the words associated with the Museum artefacts!

V S M S F F F V I B C D N B J
M C P Y Y T L W F F A C F D X
P E F I G M N W C C U U K T U
Z H M A T D B E A I L S G H B
S F O E M F U O N M D T Q S E
M D U T N I I W L T R O G Q A
U B K Z O T N R A S O M B U K
G Y X C S G O E E I N S L E E
G F M O R T R M P V C P S R R
L T C B J A O A O O Q O A N P
I P Q Z Y H N N P R T S H S O
N H K X J Z J N E H I T A T T
G D S Z H Z C T O A S E Z O L
D Q B J Z K E S M G G F L N S
N R B O R D E R M G F E A E N

Memento Mori

Famine Pot

Spitfire

Crannog

Cauldron

Customs Post

Photographs

Stone Age

Symbols

Quernstone

Smuggling

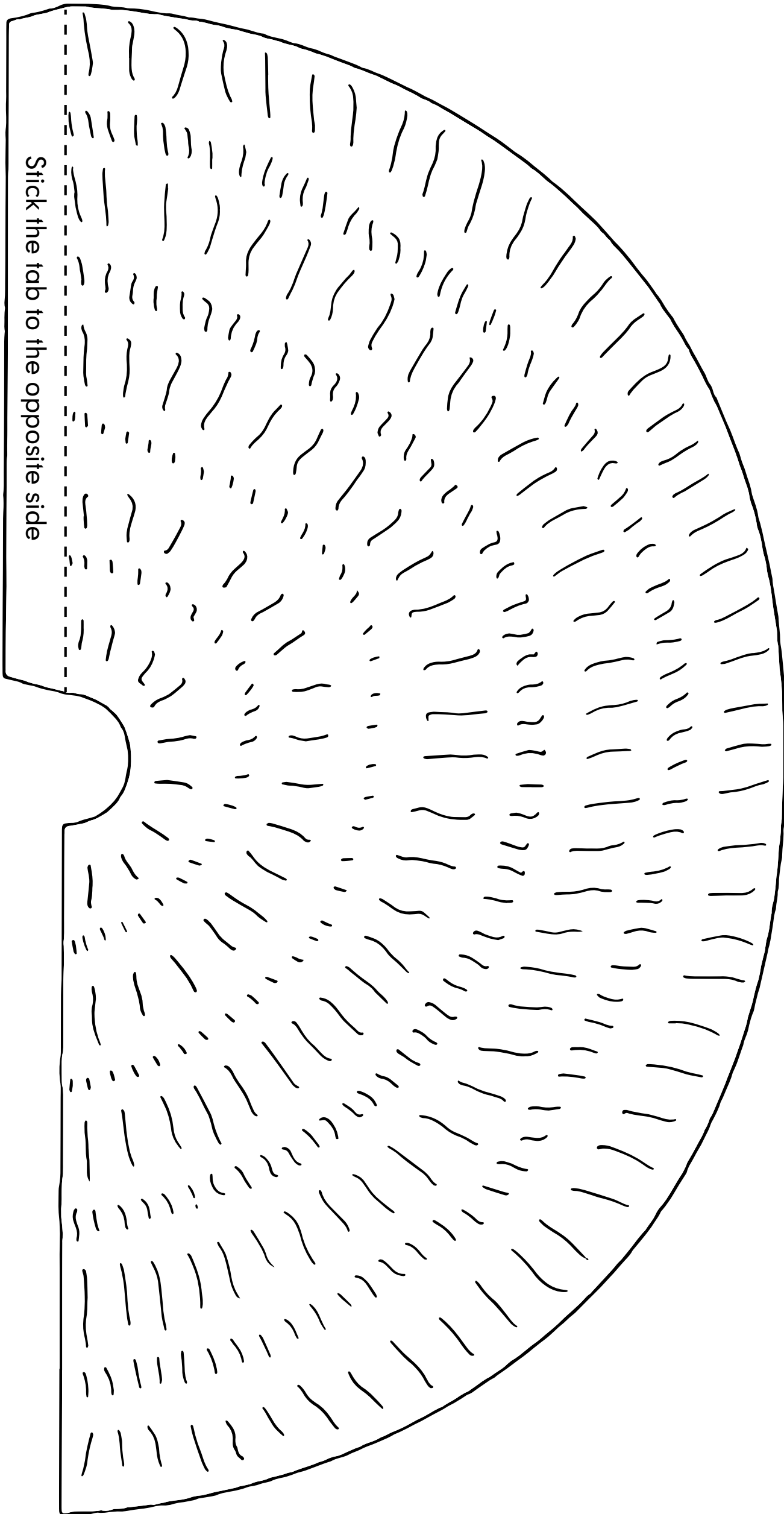
Beaker Pot

Border

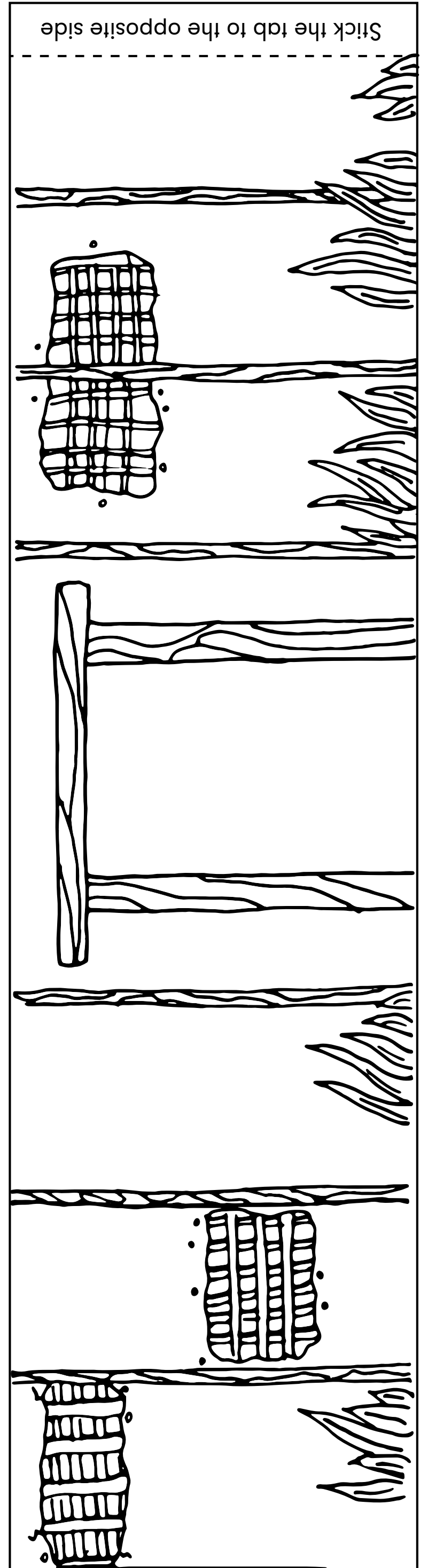


Follow-up Activity Sheet: Make a Crannóg!

The remains of many crannógs can be found across the county of Monaghan. A crannóg is a man-made island built on top of a lake, on which people lived in the past. These were built from the time of Early Medieval Ireland onwards (over a thousand years ago). People built round houses on the crannógs with thatched roofs and walls made of wattle and daub (woven wooden strips covered with a mixture of mud, straw and animal dung). Colour and cut out the crannóg house wall and roof below and stick together to make your own crannóg village for the classroom!

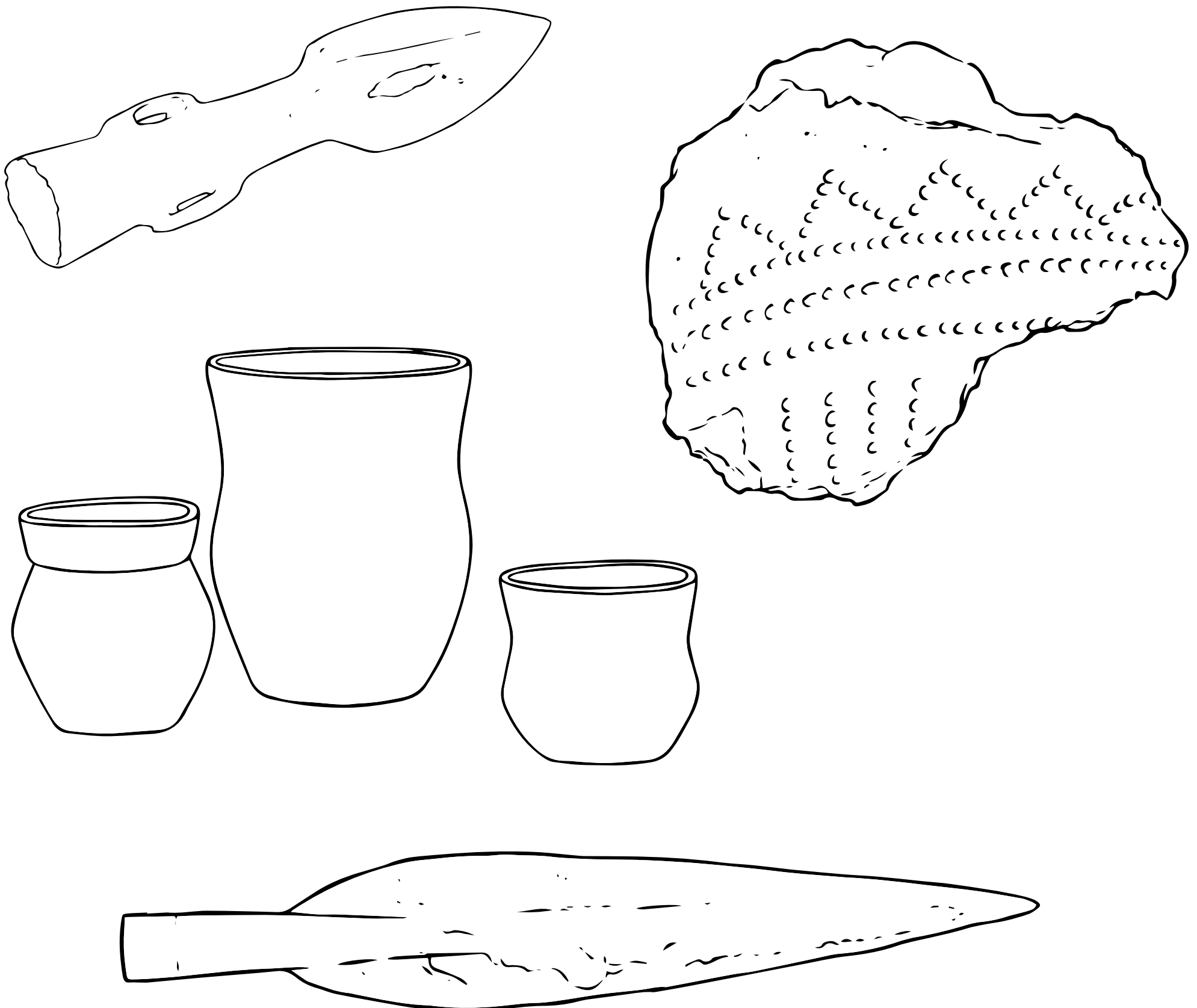


Colour in the two pieces of the crannóg building that will make up its roof and its walls. Next, cut out both pieces, following the lines and keeping the labelled tab section on each. When both pieces are cut out, put some glue on each of the two tab sections, and curve in the end of each piece to stick it to the opposite end.



Follow-up Activity Sheet: Colour and Decorate the Bronze Age Artefacts!

The Museum displays a number of objects dating to the time in history known as The Bronze Age, when people first discovered metals like bronze and used them to make metal objects like weapons and jewellery for the first time. During this time, people also made pottery (called Beaker pots) and gold objects decorated with beautiful detailed patterns. Decorate and colour in the pots, pottery sherd, and bronze spearheads in the picture below!



Links & Resources for further learning

Museum website & social media

<https://monaghan.ie/museum/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MonaghanCountyMuseum/>

https://x.com/museum_county

<https://www.youtube.com/@monaghancountymuseum8852>

Website Links

<https://monaghan.ie/museum/138-2/> - Links to cinereel clips of Monaghan dating to the 1950s and 1960s

<https://monaghan.ie/museum/exhibitions/> - Links to online exhibitions created by the Museum

<https://www.heritageinschools.ie/teachers-resources/category/history#filters> - A variety of online resources for the classroom created by the Heritage Council's Heritage in Schools scheme

<http://www.blackpigsdyke.ie/> - Dedicated website exploring the history of the Black Pig's Dyke monument (featured in discussion in the Museum)

<http://www.3dicons.ie/> - Website with access to a range of 3-D interactive models of archaeological and historical monuments from across Ireland

MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM

Músaem Chontae Mhuineachain



Contact us on:
Phone: (047) 82928 Email: comuseum@monaghancoco.ie
Website: www.monaghan.ie/museum



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